

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A medical implant system ~~device for immobilizing two structures, said device~~ comprising:

a first bone anchor; ~~for becoming secured with respect to a first structure; and~~

a second bone anchor; and

a brace for coupling the first bone anchor to the second bone anchor, wherein the brace having has a distal end portion which is adapted to be pivotally and slidingly mated with a proximal end portion of at least one of the bone anchors. ~~said first anchor, said pivotal mating occurring before said first anchor is secured with said first structure.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The device system of claim 1 wherein ~~said the~~ distal end of ~~said the~~ brace is adapted for transferring torque and compressive force from ~~said the~~ brace to at least one of the bone anchors. ~~said first anchor.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The device system of claim 1 wherein ~~said the~~ brace comprises:

a proximal end, ~~said the~~ proximal end adapted for locking with a mating receptacle attached to the proximal end of ~~[[a]] the second bone anchor secured in a second structure spaced apart from said first structure,~~ said locking occurring when ~~said the~~ distal end of ~~said the~~ brace pivots with respect to ~~said the~~ proximal end of ~~said the~~ first bone anchor, ~~said the~~ pivoting occurring while ~~said the~~ distal end of ~~said the~~ brace remains pivotally mated with ~~said the~~ proximal end of ~~said the~~ first bone anchor.

4. (Currently Amended) The device system of claim 3 wherein ~~said the~~ receptacle allows for polyaxial rotation with respect to ~~said the~~ second bone anchor.

5. (Currently Amended) The device system of claim 3 wherein ~~said the~~ receptacle is a force fit with respect to ~~said the~~ proximal end of ~~said the~~ brace.

6. (Currently Amended) The device system of claim 3 wherein ~~said the~~ receptacle provides positive feedback when ~~said the~~ proximal end of said brace is properly mated with ~~said the~~ receptacle.

7. (Currently Amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1 further comprising:  
a hinge attached to a proximal end of ~~said~~ the first bone anchor for facilitating ~~said~~ the  
pivotal mating.

8. (Currently Amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 7 wherein ~~said~~ the hinge  
allows for polyaxial rotation with respect to ~~said~~ the first bone anchor.

9. (Currently Amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1 wherein ~~said~~ the proximal  
end of ~~said~~ the brace is further adapted to accept torque applied thereto.

10. (Currently Amended) The ~~device~~ system of claim 1 wherein ~~said~~ the  
structures are vertebrae and wherein ~~said~~ the bone anchors are screws for placement in the  
pedicle of ~~said~~ the vertebrae.

11-19. (Canceled)

20. (Currently Amended) ~~A hinge for use with a bone anchor support system, said  
hinge comprising:~~ The system of claim 7, wherein the hinge comprises:

proximal and distal openings in-line from each other forming an in-line passage  
through ~~said~~ the hinge;

~~said proximal~~ the distal opening comprising a clamp for rotatable attachment to the  
head of a bone anchor;

~~said~~ the proximal opening adapted to accept the distal end of a brace prior to ~~said~~ the  
bone anchor being secured in a bone, ~~said~~ the hinge further comprising a pivot point for  
capturing an accepted brace so as to allow ~~said~~ the accepted brace to pivot with respect to  
~~said~~ the hinge but not to become released therefrom; and wherein ~~said~~ the clamp allows ~~said~~  
the distal end of an accepted brace to become detachable coupled to ~~said~~ the head of an  
attached anchor for the purpose of force transfer between ~~said~~ the brace and ~~said~~ the anchor.

21. (Currently Amended) The hinge of claim 20 wherein the proximal end of ~~said~~  
the hinge is further adapted to accept a force applying locking structure.

22. (Currently Amended) The hinge of claim 20 wherein ~~said~~ the pivot includes  
at least one pair of bearings positioned on either side of ~~said~~ the in-line passage.

23. (Currently Amended) ~~A brace for use with a bone anchor support system, said brace comprising:~~ The system of claim 1, wherein the brace comprises:

a curved shank portion slightly longer than the distance between the bones to be supported; ~~said the~~ shank comprising:

a first key at its distal end for releasably mating with a head of a first anchor so as to allow torque transfer between ~~said the~~ brace and ~~said the~~ first bone anchor; and

a second key at its proximal end for releasably mating with a receptacle at a second one of ~~said the~~ bone anchors.

24. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 23 wherein said shank further comprises:

at least one slot longitudinally displaced along ~~said the~~ shank in proximity to ~~said the~~ distal end, ~~said the~~ slot for accepting a fulcrum point affixed to ~~said the~~ first anchor so as to allow ~~said the~~ brace to pivot around ~~said the~~ fulcrum point while still maintaining ~~said the~~ shank in controlled spatial relationship with ~~said the~~ first bone anchor.

25. (Currently Amended) A medical implant device ~~for stabilizing first and second bones, said device~~ comprising:

a first bone anchor ~~having an attachment;~~

a second bone anchor; and

a brace comprising:

a means for pivoting the brace from a first position to a second position,  
wherein in the second position the brace couples the first bone anchor to the second bone anchor;

a means for slidingly adjusting the means for pivoting along the longitudinal length of the brace; and

a means for transmitting torque between the brace and the at least one of the bone anchors.

~~means for capturing a brace within said attachment; and~~

~~means for supporting a captured brace such that said captured brace can either be in-line with said anchor to assist in fastening said bone anchor to a bone, or positioned to form an angle with said anchor.~~

26. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 25 wherein ~~said~~ the supporting means comprises:

a pair of bearings displaced on opposite sides of ~~said~~ the captured brace, ~~said~~ the bearings interfacing with ~~said~~ the brace by indentations longitudinally displaced along ~~said~~ the brace.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 26 wherein ~~said~~ the brace comprises:

means for engaging a receptacle attached to ~~[[a]]~~ the second bone anchor spaced apart from ~~said~~ the first bone anchor, ~~said~~ the device further comprising;

means for polyaxially attaching ~~said~~ the receptacle to the head of ~~said~~ the second bone anchor; and wherein ~~said~~ the receptacle comprises means for engaging with ~~said~~ the brace.

30. (Currently Amended) The device of claim 29 wherein ~~said~~ the first and second anchor engagement means comprise:

means for locking ~~said~~ the brace and ~~said~~ the anchors in a fixed relationship with each other.

31-42. (Canceled)